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William James

The death of William James has taken from American psychology its most distinguished representative, and from American psychologists the colleague held in highest and most affectionate regard.

Professor James' productive period as a writer of books was late in beginning. His first extensive work, the "Principles of Psychology" (1890), was not published till its author was forty-eight years old. After it came, in the remaining twenty years of his life, his "Text-book of Psychology" in 1892, "The Will to Believe" in 1897, "Talks to Teachers on Psychology" in 1898, "Human Immortality" in 1899, "The Varieties of Religious Experience" in 1902, "Pragmatism" in 1907, "A Pluralistic Universe" in 1908, and "The Meaning of Truth" in 1909. His honors, following on his works, came likewise late, but included degrees from Padua, Edinburgh, Oxford, Durham and Geneva abroad, and from Princeton and Harvard in this country. He was Lowell Institute lecturer in Boston, Gifford lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, and Hibbert lecturer at Oxford. He was a corresponding member of learned societies in France, Germany, Denmark, Italy and Great Britain, and was a member of our own National Academy of Sciences.

Abundant honors and abundantly deserved! And yet, to many American psychologists, the loss to their science and to philosophy will be overshadowed by their feeling of personal loss. Beyond the immediate circle of his colleagues and pupils at Harvard, many were happy in his friendship, and to many of the younger workers, in particular, he had given never-to-be-forgotten words of encouragement. No American psychologist has ever been held in like esteem, and none has carried through criticism and controversy such universal and affectionate regard. This was the natural tribute paid to powers of the highest order, exercised unselfishly; to a chivalrous passion for fair play, which often placed Professor James on the less popular side of disputed questions; and to a courtesy that assumed, in every opponent, standards and ideals equal to his own.

James, the psychologist, will long be held in high repute. Yet a growing science leaves even its ablest representatives behind; and despite the originality of his thought, the erudition that he so lightly carried, his consummate skill in inner observation, and his literary charm, the work that he has bequeathed to us will presently be superseded. But be that as it may,—the modest sincerity of the man, his human friendliness, and his crusading spirit were of the best that the world affords, and can never be outgrown. The EDITORS.